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Working-Class Politics

WHERE the master-class politician and his assistant the "labor-leader" claim, in the mass, a vast political intelligence, the Socialist finds only a vast political ignorance gravitating towards two extremities. On the one hand the slave who says: "Vote for the man with the beautiful promise and all will be well!" and on the other the equally ignorant slave who says: "Politics is of no use to me. I take no interest in it."

The promise dupe is no novelty. Thousands of soldiers after salvaging an entire world, according to the patriots, were enthralled by the magic of the number 2,000—when applied to a bonus. It suggests an incident in ancient history. In the middle of the fifth century, B.C., the Athenians were engaged in the Peloponnesian War, and, being hard pressed, had to resort to allowing their slaves to fight for them, promising them their freedom if they won. The slaves did win the war for their masters and 2,000 of them were escorted to the temple to receive the rites of freemen. There their masters fell upon them with the sword and slew them all.* It would seem that politicians' promises and the gullibility of the slaves in "falling for" them have neither one altered in the course of twenty-four centuries. The one answer to the promise dupe is the failure of his promise to realize.

Have Slaves a Political Interest?

To answer the slave who says he has no political interest we look to the definition: "Politics is the business of government." Now, there can be no government unless there are those who govern and those who are governed. Further, the troubles and risks of governing being considerable, none undertake them unless they can gain thereby—and the ruling class is the robbing class. Even in Russia the function of the State is to "expropriate the expropriators." Political interest proceeds from economic interest. Thus politics appears under two phases: On the one hand Master-Class Politics, or the centralized business of robbing and ruling; and on the other Working-class Politics, or the organized resistance on the part of the workers to the rule of the robbers. How, then, can anyone deny that the worker has no interest in politics?

Our Masters' Political Methods.

Most constant of the methods employed in politics by our masters is that of general miseducation through press, school and pulpit—through the press misinforming us on current events and impressing on us the "democratic" nature of our society; through the school, misinforming us on historic facts and impressing on us the idealistic nature of the development of society, urging that progress results only from the perfection of our own "moral and inner nature"; through the pulpit, teaching us the moral code of "Obey and be robbed." The shirkers realize that their power rests on the ignorance of the workers; and if any capitalist institution is 100 per cent. perfect, efficient, it is their institution for general miseducation.

There is some conflict of economic interest in different sections of the ruling class, resulting in opposing master class political parties—Tweedledee and Tweedledum. In periods of stress these join hands, so slight are the differences between them. However, they are usually a capable means for attracting the slave's attention from his own position

*Ward's "Ancient Lowly" (Kerr), p. 107.

and interest and directing it towards the weighty problem of which of his enemies to support.

Perhaps the most profitable investment of the capitalist is that of buying up members in the ranks of the slaves. In hard times, when the slaves seem near to waking up there is no consolation for the robber equal to a faithful "labor leader." The economic struggle of the workers might prove not only a loss of profits, but also a valuable experience to the workers, were it not for the potent panegyric of the "labor" press, of the "labor" man in politics, of the verbose organizer, and of that most dangerous of all "sims"—the "sympathizer with labor."

At times the capitalist's ingenious miseducation, his multi-party system, his faithful "labor" men, would avail him little, were it not for the trump card he holds in reserve—the fact that he has force at his disposal. At such times he does not hesitate to use force freely.

Our Political Methods.

Due to the fact that the enemy takes the initiative, the very constructiveness of our political methods takes on the form of retaliation. To offset the miseducation of our masters we must awaken our own

legedly labor political parties. And as for the masters' trump card—force—we must capture it and make it ours. The force is exerted by members of our own class—and there, if anywhere, is the crying need for suitable propaganda. Moreover we must prepare our own ranks for every conceivable phase of the struggle. Many a bloody massacre of our class is to be explained by the neglect on the part of our class of what every military tactician makes his objective—to take the initiative and thereby have choice of manner, time and place.

Our Political Problems.

The master class politicians and their friends of the labor parties have been touring the country to tell us what our problems are. According to them we need the unity of all classes, the cleaning up of a corrupt administration, lighter taxes and a revision of the tariff. Which is the great need to you with the tight drawn belts—the unity of classes, or something to eat? Does a corrupt administration trouble you? Since you must oppose it, is not its corruption a help to you? Better turn your attention to the corruption of the canned garbage you eat, to the filth you live in, to the corruption in your labor organization. Which is of the more importance to you—the heavy taxes you don't pay, or the heavy work you do—when the masters let you? Which do you need the most—a tariff to protect your master's goods, or an organization to protect your own interests? This tariff issue is such a pet bauble it is almost worth a second thought. If, by any manipulation of the tariff, conditions should become "good," either here or elsewhere, and the right to be robbed easily secured, would not the freights to that place be full of slaves until the market was glutted? That being so how can tariff one way or 'tother, be of any interest to the slave class?

According to our own experience we are faced with quite a different set of problems. Part of the time we have too much work, the rest of the time no work, and all the time insufficient of the comforts and necessities of life. We face these problems under the menace of war, of insecurity in our livelihood, of the hostility of our masters, of the scabbing and traitorhood in our own ranks. Every one of these problems is to be traced to one cause, and one cause only—that one section of society owns the means of production upon which the rest of us are dependent for our livelihood. It is only because of that that we have not increased our leisure and our standard of living, with every increase in the efficiency of production. It is because we are propertyless that we are slaves to those who have property. The working of the system does not permit us to acquire property, so our emancipation lies in destroying the privilege of those who have property—i.e., in abolishing their property in the means of production. The privileged will resist us. Their power to resist lies in the State—the monster that rules us—whose feet are to be seen in the police and militia and whose head, high above the clouds of the Canadian Manufacturers' Association, bids us go forth and be cannon fodder. Freedom for our class can be won only by conquering the State.

This is politics for our class—to acquaint our class with its slave position and its interests, to make it realize its historic mission, to solidify its forces for struggle, cleansing it of reaction, conquer the capitalist state, and establish ourselves over the robbers.

F. W. T.

DOMINION ELECTION 1921. SOCIALIST PARTY OF CANADA

CANDIDATES.

BRITISH COLUMBIA.

Nanaimo: W. A. Pritchard.

Vancouver (3 seats)

Burrard: J. D. Harrington.

Centre: T. O'Connor.

South: J. Kavanagh.

MANITOBA.

Winnipeg North: B. B. Russell.

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class to their position and interest. There may be much to recommend in a worker marking his ballot for a Socialist candidate; but he will have done far more for the working class political struggle by spreading Socialist literature, by preaching the "gospel of discontent" to his mates on the job, by attending workers' study classes to further clarify his knowledge of the history of his class to further realize its historic mission.

It would seem that where the enemy lacks complete harmony of interests, we would have an advantage over them in enjoying a complete harmony. But such is not the fact. Where the capitalists are invariably united on any important issue we are invariably and lamentably disunited. Since Socialism is but the political integration of an economic class struggle, the work of the class-conscious worker must be to solidify the ranks of his class for the struggle. We cannot retaliate on the loss for buying out members of our ranks by buying out members of theirs; but we can and must, expose the traitors in our labor organizations and al-